

Capitol Police watchdog says force needs a "culture change"

WASHINGTON (AP) — The top watchdog for the U.S. Capitol Police told a House committee Thursday that there is a need for a culture change within the force after broad failures in its response to the Jan. 6 insurrection, including missed intelligence predicting a "war" and weapons that were so old that officers didn't feel comfortable using them.

Capitol Police Inspector General Michael A. Bolton has investigated the force's missteps since the siege, when hundreds of President Donald Trump's supporters broke into the building and sent lawmakers fleeing for their lives. In a 104-page report obtained by The Associated Press, he paints a dire picture of his agency's ability to respond to future threats and casts serious doubt on whether the force would be able to respond to another large-scale attack.

Bolton told the House Administration Committee that the Capitol Police needs to improve its intelligence gathering, training, and operational planning. There also needs to be a



CULTURE CLUB

In this Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2021, photo, police form a line to guard the Capitol after violent rioters stormed the Capitol, in Washington.

Associated Press

change in the way that the force views its own mission, he said. "In regards a cultural change, we see that the department needs

to move away from the thought process as a traditional police department and move to the posture of a protective agency,"

Bolton said. "A police department is geared to be a reactive force, for the most part. Whereas a protective agency is postured, in

their training and planning, to be proactive to prevent events such as January 6th."

Continued on next page



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In this Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2021, photo, violent rioters try to break through a police line on the West Front of the Capitol, in Washington.

Associated Press

Continued from Front

The Capitol Police have so far refused to publicly release the report — prepared in March and marked as "law enforcement sensitive." In the document, Bolton found that the department's deficiencies were, and remain, widespread: Equipment was old and stored badly; officers didn't complete required training; and there was a lack of direction at the Civil Disturbance Unit, which exists to ensure that legislative functions of Congress are not disrupted by civil unrest or protest activity. That was exactly what happened on Jan. 6 when Trump supporters violently pushed past police and broke into the Capitol as Congress

counted the Electoral College votes that certified Joe Biden's victory. The report also focuses on several pieces of missed intelligence, including the force's own inconsistent information gathering and an FBI memo sent the day before the insurrection that then-Capitol Police Chief Steven Sund has told lawmakers he never saw. That memo, which is included in the report's appendix, warned of threatening online postings by Trump backers, including one comment that Congress "needs to hear glass breaking, doors being kicked in" and blood being spilled. "Get violent ... Stop calling this a march, or rally, or a protest," read the post recounted in the memo. "Go

there ready for war. We get our President or we die. NOTHING else will achieve this goal." A separate report prepared by the Department of Homeland Security in December alerted the police to an online posting that included a map of tunnels under the Capitol used by lawmakers and staff, the document says. The Capitol Police said in a statement Wednesday that officials had already made some of the improvements recommended by Bolton, and that the siege was "a pivotal moment" in history that showed the need for "major changes" in how the department operates. Still, they said that they would need more money and staff to make improve-

ments. "It is important to note that nearly all of the recommendations require significant resources the department does not have," the statement said. House lawmakers are hoping to provide more resources to the force in spending legislation that could be proposed as soon as this month. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Thursday that the money would not only go to "hardening" the Capitol's windows and doors but also to hiring and training officers. Bolton told the panel that better Capitol Police training should be the highest priority. "If you want to invest dollars, that's the place to invest in, training," Bolton said. "Training deficiencies put officers, our brave men and women, in a position not to succeed." The riot has pushed the Capitol Police force toward a state of crisis, with officers working extra shifts and forced overtime to protect the Capitol. The acting chief, Yogananda Pittman, received a vote of no confidence from the union in February, reflecting widespread distrust among the rank and file who were left exposed and injured as the violent mob descended on the building. Morale has plummeted. The entire force is also grieving the deaths of three of their own. Officer Brian Sicknick collapsed and died after engaging with protesters on Jan. 6. Officer William "Billy" Evans was killed April 2 when he was hit by a car that rammed into a barricade outside the Senate. A third officer, Howard Liebengood, died by suicide in the days after the insurrection. The report describes in detail how department equipment was substandard,

including at least 11 different types of munitions that appeared to have expired. Some equipment hadn't been replaced in more than two decades. Riot shields that shattered upon impact as the officers fended off the violent mob had been improperly stored. Weapons that could have fired tear gas were so old that officers didn't feel comfortable using them. Other weapons that could have done more to disperse the crowd were never staged before a Trump rally held near the White House, and those who were ordered to get backup supplies to the front lines could not make it through the aggressive crowd. In other cases, weapons weren't used because of "orders from leadership," the document says. Those weapons — called "less lethal" because they are designed to disperse rather than kill — could have helped the police repel the rioters as they moved toward the Capitol after Trump's speech, according to the report. A timeline attached to the report also gives a more detailed look at Capitol Police movements, commands and conversations as the chaos unfolded. It recounts several instances in which police and SWAT teams rescued individual lawmakers trapped in the Capitol and sheds new light on conversations in which Sund begged for National Guard support. The document quotes Army Staff Secretary Walter Piatt saying didn't like the "optics" of the National Guard at the Capitol and would recommend not sending them at 2:26 p.m., after the rioters had already smashed in. The Pentagon eventually did approve the Guard's presence, and Guard members arrived after 5 p.m. □

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AP sources: Tool behind crackdown on opioids could expire

By MICHAEL BALSAMO

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration has been slow-walking its work on the extension of a legislative order that would keep in place a sweeping tool that's helped federal agents crack down on drugs chemically similar to fentanyl, three people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press.

In recent weeks, the people said, the White House and Justice Department leaders have, on several occasions, canceled meetings with officials at the Drug Enforcement Administration to discuss the plan around so-called fentanyl analogues, which are generally foreign-made drugs with a very close chemical makeup to the dangerous opioid. The people had direct knowledge of the discussions but were not authorized to speak publicly and spoke to the AP on the condition of anonymity.

The legislation temporarily classifies the synthetic opioids as a Schedule 1 drug under the federal Controlled Substances Act, making it easier for prosecutors to build cases against traffickers. The emergency authority, initially authorized in 2018, is set to expire next month and requires Congress to reauthorize it.

The Biden administration will need to either quickly move forward to lobby Congress to pass another extension, propose a per-



In this March 25, 2021, file photo, President Joe Biden speaks during a news conference in the East Room of the White House in Washington.

manent legislative solution that could quickly pass the House and the Senate or put a plan in place to prosecute cases involving the synthetic opioids if the temporary authorization expires.

"The Biden-Harris Administration is committed to avoiding expiration of this legislation, and we have communicated that clearly to both parties in Congress," White House spokesman Andrew Bates said.

There is growing concern from lawmakers and law enforcement officials, who fear that failing to act could lead to a surge in opioid deaths, and the rapidly approaching deadline makes it nearly impossible to reauthorize it in time. The

U.S. is in the midst of an opioid crisis.

But saying a quick yes isn't quite so simple. The situation is politically thorny and has the potential to anger both Democrats and Republicans. Most of the drugs are coming in from China, and if President Joe Biden were to skip the reauthorization it could create foreign policy issues, but there are concerns from some in the administration over mandatory minimum sentences attached to the order that have the potential to anger reformists.

The law triggers some mandatory penalties for possessing large quantities of fentanyl or fentanyl analogues, and it's been a hold-up, the people said.

For example, possessing 100 grams (3.5 ounces) of a fentanyl analogue triggers a 10-year mandatory minimum penalty; the same penalty would apply for possessing 1 kilogram (2.2 pounds) of heroin.

But in the last three years, only eight prosecutions would have even qualified for mandatory minimum sentences, according to the people.

The rate at which federal law enforcement encounters fentanyl analogues has dropped drastically in the last few years. Law enforcement officials say that's in part because there is little incentive for drug traffickers to change the chemical compound given that the law had categorized both

fentanyl and analogues in the same class. But they worry it will skyrocket if the order isn't extended.

The analogues are powerful synthetic opioids that can be significantly more potent than morphine or heroin.

The number of deaths from fentanyl-related substances is unknown, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that there were more than 50,000 deaths involving all synthetic opioids in the 12-month period ending July 2020.

The Justice Department during President Donald Trump's administration lobbied to make the ban permanent, putting fentanyl analogues in the same legal category as heroin and cocaine forever. But Congress only voted to extend the temporary ban.

Justice officials said they were seeking a seven-month extension while working on a more permanent solution and were taking the May 6 deadline seriously. But no one has submitted legislation sponsoring that extension in Congress.

"We will work with Congress to seek a clean, seven-month extension to prevent this important law enforcement tool from lapsing while we address legitimate concerns related to mandatory minimums and researcher access to these substances," the Justice Department said in a statement. □

Associated Press

Sarah Sanders raises nearly \$5M for Arkansas governor's race

By ANDREW DeMILLO

Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — Former White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders' campaign on Thursday said she has raised nearly \$5 million in her bid to be Arkansas' next governor, breaking the record for quarterly fundraising in the state. Sanders' campaign said the majority of the more than \$4.8 mil-

lion raised during the first three months of the year came from out-of-state donors. More than \$1.5 million came from Arkansans. Sanders' campaign, which launched in January, said it held more than 50 events in Arkansas during the quarter. Sanders is running against Attorney General Leslie Rutledge in next year's Republican primary to succeed two-term

GOP Gov. Asa Hutchinson, who is barred by term limits from seeking reelection. Republican Lt. Gov. Tim Griffin dropped out of the governor's race about two weeks after Sanders joined it and is now running for attorney general. Two Democrats, Supha Xayprasith-Mays and James "Rus" Russell, are also running for governor next year. □



In this Friday, Sept. 6, 2019, file photo, Fox News contributor Sarah Sanders makes her first appearance on the "Fox & Friends" television program in New York.

Associated Press

Lawmakers fighting like cats and dogs? Not over this bill

By **HOLLY RAMER**

Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) —

Nine lives notwithstanding, killing a cat in a hit-and-run soon could become illegal in New Hampshire.

New Hampshire was ahead of the pack when it passed a law nearly 40 years ago that requires drivers who injure or kill dogs to notify police or the animals' owners, or else face a \$1,000 fine. It is unclear why cats and other pets were left out, but the state Legislature is currently considering an expansion that would give cats and canines equal standing.

"It's a cataclysmic bill. To not pass this would be catastrophic," Sen. Tom Sherman, D-Rye, said Tuesday, drawing chuckles from fellow members of a Senate committee. "It's a categorical imperative: You have to report," chimed in Sen. David Watters, D-Dover.

Republican Rep. Daryl Abbas sponsored the bill on behalf of his wife, who found their 5-year-old cat, Arrow, dead on the street near their Salem home in July 2019. The partially blind black and gray tabby had once again achieved his "daily goal" of escaping from the house and was hit by a car, Abbas said.

"I remember telling my wife, 'It's an accident, we



In this July 27, 2018 photo provided by Daryl Abbas, Arrow, a cat whose death has inspired legislation to put cats on equal footing with dogs, at least when they are run over, sits in Salem, N.H. Associated Press

have to forgive the person,' but I was more upset that the person didn't stop," he said. "Who doesn't stop?" Abbas contacted an animal control officer, who told him there was no reporting requirement. When he expressed surprise, she suggested he contact his state representative. And so he drafted the bill himself.

Abbas highlighted that New Hampshire law already requires people to report any property damage caused by a motor vehicle to the owner.

"The only glaring exception is if the damage is to a person's cat. Literally under the law, if you were to hit a statue of a fake cat with your car, you would have to report that, but not the real cat," he said. "The real cat and the fake cat should at least have equal property protection."

In any state, hitting an animal with a car could be a potential violation as destruction of property, but the New Hampshire bill is part of a trend of states going further, said Lora Dunn, director of the Criminal Jus-

tice Program at the Animal Legal Defense Fund.

"These laws are really a nationwide trend to recognize that animals are more than your property, they are living, feeling beings. They have the capacity to suffer, and they're deserving of positive experiences as well," she said. "These laws really recognize that sentience and also the bond between animals and their human companions."

Connecticut has a similar law to New Hampshire's existing statute about dogs. In Massachusetts, the law

includes cats and dogs, New York requires drivers to report injuries to dogs, cats, horses or cattle and Rhode Island's statute covers all domesticated animals.

"In this scenario, I looked at animals that traditionally are domestic animals that you keep in your house, animals that you develop affection for," Abbas said. "I don't mean any disrespect to ferrets, but let them argue on their own merits."

The bill's cosponsors include Rep. Anita Burroughs, a Democrat whose cats have been known to show up by her side during Zoom committee hearings. And while other legislation has sparked contentious debate, the bipartisan measure has had an unusually smooth path so far.

No one spoke against it at public hearings, the House passed it without debate earlier this month and a Senate committee has recommended its passage by the full body.

Republican Gov. Chris Sununu, whose cat has its own Instagram account, said Thursday he supports the bill.

"Cats and dogs, dogs and cats, you can't have one without the other," he said. "I think it's a parity bill, and unless they were to change something, I fully intend to sign it." □

Study finds that blocking seats on planes reduces virus risk



In this Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2021, file photo, a passenger wears a face mask she travels after take off from Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta.

Associated Press

By **The Associated Press**

A new study says leaving middle seats open could give airline passengers

more protection from the virus that causes COVID-19. Researchers said the risk of passengers being exposed

to the virus from an infected person on the plane could be reduced by 23% to 57% if middle seats are empty, compared with a full flight.

The study released Wednesday supports the response of airlines that limited seating early in the pandemic. However, all U.S. airlines except Delta now sell every seat they can, and Delta will stop blocking middle seats on May 1.

The airlines argue that filters and air-flow systems on most planes make them safe when passengers wear face masks, as they are now required to do by federal regulation.

Researchers at the U.S.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Kansas State University estimated how far airborne virus particles travel inside a plane. They used mannequins that emitted aerosol to measure the flow of virus particles through airline cabin mock-ups.

Nor did it consider whether passengers are vaccinated against COVID-19. The CDC says vaccinated people can travel at low risk to themselves, although the agency still recommends against nonessential travel. Airlines for America, a trade group for the largest U.S. carriers, said airlines use several layers of measures to prevent the spread of

the virus on planes, including face masks, asking passengers about their health, and stepped-up cleaning of cabins. The group cited a Harvard University report funded by the airline industry as showing that the risk of transmitting the coronavirus on planes is very low.

Airlines were divided last year over filling middle seats. While Delta, Southwest, Alaska and JetBlue limited seating on planes, United Airlines never did and American Airlines only blocked seats for a short time. It was mostly an academic question, because relatively few flights last year were crowded. That is changing. □

Ukraine seeks stronger Western backing amid Russian buildup

By YURAS KARMANAU

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) —

Ukraine's top diplomat asked Thursday for stronger Western backing, saying "words of support aren't enough" amid escalating tensions in the country's east and a Russian troop buildup across the border. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, speaking after talks with his counterparts from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, asked the Baltic nations to reach out to other European Union and NATO members about offering "practical assistance" to Kyiv.

More than 14,000 people have died in seven years of fighting between Ukrainian forces and Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine that erupted after Russia's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. Efforts to reach a political settlement have stalled and violations of a shaky truce have become increasingly frequent in recent weeks across Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland known as the Donbas. Ukraine and the West also have sounded alarms about the concentration of troops along Russia's border, a buildup that the U.S. and NATO have described



In this handout photo released by Ukrainian Foreign Ministry Press Office, from left, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis, Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics, Estonian Foreign Minister Eva-Maria Liimets and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba pose for a photo prior to their talks in Kyiv, Ukraine, Thursday, April 15, 2021

Associated Press

as the largest since 2014. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy heads Friday to Paris to discuss the tensions with French President Emmanuel Macron. At the end of their lunch, German Chancellor Angela Merkel will join them for a trilateral video call.

Zelenskyy said after chairing a meeting of Ukraine's security council that the discussions in Paris will be important for preparing

the so-called "Normandy format" talks involving the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany.

Their last meeting in Paris in December 2019 helped ease tensions but failed to make any progress on a political settlement.

European Council President Charles Michel expressed the 27-nation bloc's "unwavering support" for Ukraine, saying in a statement after the call

with Zelenskyy that Russia's moves on the border "represent threatening and destabilizing activities."

Russia has argued that it's free to deploy its forces wherever it deems necessary on its territory. The Russian defense minister charged earlier this week that the buildup was a response to security threats posed by NATO forces near Russia's borders.

Russia's Foreign Minis-

try spokeswoman Maria Zakharova on Thursday dismissed Western concerns about the troop buildup as a "propaganda campaign" and called on the West to encourage Kyiv to de-escalate tensions in the east.

Kremlin officials have warned Ukraine against trying to use force to reclaim control of the rebel east, saying that Russia may intervene to protect Russian civilians in the region.

"Russia isn't interested in fueling a civil war in Donbas and will do everything to protect its citizens and ensure peace," Zakharova said. She urged Ukraine's Western allies to stop "encouraging the Kyiv regime to engage in disastrous bloody adventures" by providing military assistance and political support.

Amid the recent tensions, the U.S. informed Turkey that two U.S. warships would sail to the Black Sea on April 14-15 and stay there about three weeks. But Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said Thursday that the U.S. Embassy had notified Ankara that the two warships wouldn't be making the crossing. U.S. Navy ships have made regular visits to the Black Sea in recent years, vexing Moscow. □

Canadian lawmaker caught naked during video conference

OTTAWA, Ontario (AP) —

A Canadian Parliament member was caught stark naked in a virtual meeting of the House of Commons. William Amos, who has represented the Quebec district of Pontiac since 2015, appeared on the screens of his fellow lawmakers completely naked Wednesday. The pandemic has meant many Canadian lawmakers participate in sessions via video conference instead of in person.

A screenshot obtained by The Canadian Press shows Amos standing behind a desk between the Quebec and Canadian flags, his private parts hidden by what appears to be a mo-

bile phone in one hand.

"This was an unfortunate error," Amos said in a statement sent by email. "My video was accidentally turned on as I was

changing into my work clothes after going for a jog. I sincerely apologize to my colleagues in the House of Commons for this unintentional distraction.

Obviously, it was an honest mistake and it won't happen again."

Claude DeBellefeuille, a legislator for the opposition Bloc Quebecois party, raised the incident in a point of order after question period, suggesting that parliamentary decorum requires male Parliament members to wear a jacket and tie — and a shirt, underwear and trousers.

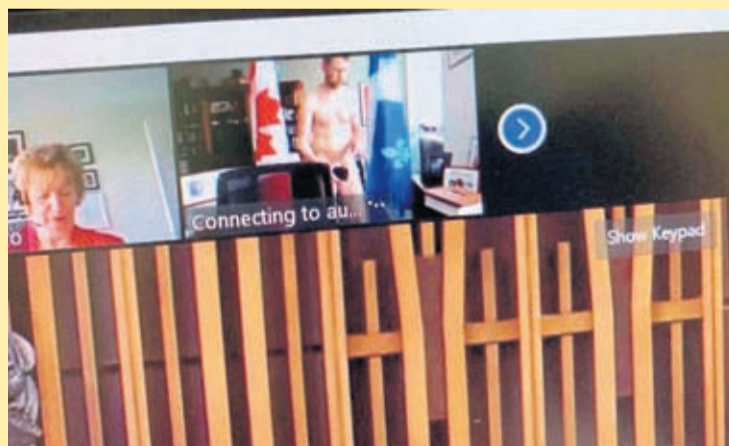
Speaker Anthony Rota later thanked DeBellefeuille for her "observations" and clarified that while he had not seen anything, he checked with technicians and confirmed they saw something. He reminded lawmakers to always be

vigilant when they are near a camera and microphone.

Amos, the parliamentary secretary to Industry Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne, was visible only to Parliament members and staffers on an internal video conference feed. Because he was not speaking, his image did not show up on the public feed.

Liberal Party colleague Mark Holland said Amos was "utterly mortified." Holland said he was satisfied with the explanation from his colleague.

"I don't think there was any ill intent. It's certainly an unfortunate circumstance," Holland said. □



This screenshot obtained by The Canadian Press shows Liberal MP William Amos, top, naked in his office during a video conference call on Wednesday, April 14, 2021.

Associated Press

Blinken in Afghanistan to sell Biden troop withdrawal

By **MATTHEW LEE**

AP Diplomatic Writer

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) —

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken made an unannounced visit to Afghanistan on Thursday to sell Afghan leaders and a wary public on President Joe Biden's decision to withdraw all American troops from the country and end America's longest war.

Blinken sought to assure senior Afghan politicians that the United States remains committed to the country despite Biden's announcement a day earlier that the 2,500 U.S. soldiers remaining in the country would be coming home by the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks that led to the U.S. invasion in 2001.

"I wanted to demonstrate with my visit the ongoing commitment of the United States to the Islamic Republic and the people of Afghanistan," Blinken told Afghan President Ashraf Ghani as they met at the presidential palace in Kabul. "The partnership is changing, but the partnership itself is enduring."

"We respect the decision and are adjusting our priorities," Ghani told Blinken, expressing gratitude for the sacrifices of US troops.

Later, in a meeting with Abdullah Abdullah, who



Abdullah Abdullah, Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation, right, meets with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, at the Sapidar Palace in Kabul, Afghanistan, Thursday, April 15, 2021.

heads the National Reconciliation Council, Blinken repeated his message, saying that "we have a new chapter, but it is a new chapter that we're writing together."

"We are grateful to your people, your country, your administration," Abdullah said.

NATO immediately followed Biden's lead on Wednesday, saying its roughly 7,000 non-American forces in Afghanistan would be departing within

a few months, ending the foreign military presence that had been a fact of life for a generation of Afghans already reeling from more than 40 years of conflict. Biden, Blinken, Austin have all tried to put a brave face on the pullout, maintaining that the U.S.- and NATO-led missions to Afghanistan had achieved their goal of decimating Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network that launched the 9/11 attacks and clearing the country of terrorist elements

that could use Afghan soil to plot similar strikes.

However, that argument has faced pushback from some U.S. lawmakers and human rights advocates, who say the withdrawal will result in the loss of freedoms that Afghans enjoyed after the Taliban was ousted from power in late 2001.

"My views are very pessimistic," Naheed Farid, a member of parliament, told reporters when asked her thoughts about the future of her country. Farid was

one of a half-dozen, mostly women, civic leaders who met with Blinken at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. She did not elaborate.

Despite billions of U.S. dollars in aid, 20 years after the invasion, more than half of Afghanistan's 36 million people live on less than \$1.90 a day, according to World Bank figures. Afghanistan is also considered one of the worst countries in the world for women's rights and wellbeing, according to the Georgetown Institute for Women Peace and Security. For many Afghans the past two decades have been disappointing, as corruption has overtaken successive governments and powerful warlords have amassed wealth and loyal militias who are well armed. Many Afghans fear the chaos will worsen even more once America leaves.

At a news conference in the capital before leaving, Blinken said while America is drawing down its military force, it is stepping up its engagement with the Afghan government and people and would continue financial support for the Afghan National Security Forces. Washington pays a \$4 billion-a-year bill to maintain Afghanistan's security forces. □

Associated Press

Lawyer: 290 relatives file for compensation in MH-17 downing

By **MIKE CORDER**

Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — A lawyer for rela-

tives of people killed in the 2014 downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over eastern Ukraine told a court

hearing Thursday that 290 relatives and partners of the victims have filed compensation claims for "emotional distress" against the four suspects charged in the downing.

Lawyer Arlette Schijns was speaking at a preliminary hearing in the long-running legal proceedings against three Russians and a Ukrainian charged with involvement in shooting down the Amsterdam-to-Kuala Lumpur flight on July 17, 2014. All 298 people on board the Boeing 777 were killed. None of the suspects have appeared in court and the case is proceeding in their absence.

"No compensation can

offset the losses suffered by relatives. That said, compensation can provide a feeling of recognition when it comes to moral damage and can also offer a certain feeling of justice," Schijns told judges. She said around 90 relatives want to make victim impact statements during the trial, which is expected to begin hearings on the substance of the charges in June. After a painstaking international investigation spanning years, prosecutors charged four suspects

Russians Igor Girkin, Sergey Dubinskiy and Oleg Pukatov as well as Ukrainian Leonid Kharchenko with multiple counts of murder

for their alleged involvement in shooting down the flight. Prosecutors say the plane was shattered in mid-air when it was hit by a Buk missile system trucked into Ukraine from a Russian military base. Russia denies any involvement in the downing.

Schijns said the amount of compensation per relative ranged from 40,000-50,000 euros (\$48,000-60,000) depending on the relatives' relationship to the victim. She said under civil law, many relatives are unable to claim compensation, such as siblings who did not live with a victim at the time flight MH-17 was shot down. □



In this July 17, 2014, file photo, people walk amongst the debris at the crash site of MH17 passenger plane near the village of Grabovo, Ukraine, that left 298 people killed.

Associated Press

A retiring Castro to bring younger face to Cuba's communists

By **ANDREA RODRIGUEZ** and
JOSHUA GOODMAN
Associated Press

HAVANA (AP)—This week's Communist Party congress could be the last with a Castro at the helm of Cuba's all-powerful political institution.

Six years after the death of Fidel Castro, his brother and fellow leader of the island's 1959 revolution, Raul Castro, is being watched to see if he fulfills his commitment to give up the reins of the only political organization permitted in the country of 11 million people.

Raul Castro in 2016 said that he would give up the post of party secretary-general at the party's eighth congress, which is scheduled to begin Friday. Standing down would complete the move to turn control over to a younger generation of revolutionaries led by Miguel Díaz-Canel, who took over the presidency from Castro in 2018.

Many Cubans are anxious over the change after having their daily affairs guided for more than six decades by a Castro, and Raul Castro's expected exit from the political scene couldn't come at a more difficult time. The coronavirus pandemic, painful financial reforms and restrictions reimposed by the



In this April 16, 2016 file photo, Cuba's President Raul Castro addresses the Cuban Communist Party Congress in Havana, Cuba.

Trump administration have again brought food lines and shortages reminiscent of the "special period" that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. But unlike past crisis that brought Cubans together, concern is on the rise, fueled by the spread of the Internet and growing inequality that has laid bare the socialist system's failings. "We've lost an entire decade," said Alina Lopez, a Havana historian who runs a blog that is a forum for leftist criticism of the government. "They don't know how to bring real change

because any change must start with a lot of self-critique." At the previous Communist Party congress, in 2016, Castro announced that owing to the "inexorable laws of life," he would step down as first secretary-general of the Communist Party in 2021 and yield power to Díaz-Canel. Also expected to resign at the gathering is Castro's deputy, 90-year-old José Ramón Machado. That would potentially leave the 17-member Politburo for the first time without any veterans of the guerrilla insurgency, or what many Cubans af-

fectionately refer to as the "historic generation."

William LeoGrande, an American University expert on Cuba, said such an outcome could greatly enhance Díaz-Canel's ability to push through overdue reforms as part of a broader economic opening approved a decade ago.

In January, Díaz-Canel finally pulled the trigger on a plan approved two congresses ago to unify the island's dual currency system, giving rise to fears of inflation. After the economy contracted 11% last year, he also threw the doors

open to a broader range of private enterprise that had been stamped out by state planning, permitting Cubans to legally operate almost any self-run businesses from their homes.

But authorities have yet to tackle what LeoGrande considers the elephant in the room—an overhaul of the bloated state-run companies and government agencies on which the vast majority of Cubans depend for their meager salaries and subsistence.

"They keep saying they will require the state enterprises to become profitable but that's precisely where there's resistance because the private sector isn't growing fast enough," said LeoGrande, who frequently conducts research in Cuba but hasn't traveled there since prior to the pandemic. "Laying off a lot of people could lead to social and political problems."

To be sure, any change in Cuba is likely to be slow. The word "continuity" scrawled in red is repeated multiple times on a giant billboard touting the party gathering erected in the same Revolution Plaza where Fidel Castro at his height in the 1960s and 1970s used to mesmerize Cubans with his anti-imperialist harangues. □

Associated Press

Mexico moves to require biometric data from cellphone users

MEXICO CITY (AP)—Activists and opposition figures cried foul Wednesday after Mexico's Senate passed legislation to require cellphone companies to gather customers' identification and biometric data, like fingerprints or eye scans.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's Morena party supported the bill, saying it is needed to fight crimes like extortion and kidnapping that frequently involve the use of cellphones.

The legislation, which was already passed by the Chamber of Deputies, would give cell companies

two years to collect the data and make it available to the government. Civic groups said the measure would put customers' personal data at risk and do little to fight crime. The Mexican government has tried cellphone registries before without success and hasn't even been able to block cell calls from within prisons.

López Obrador, who still must sign the bill for it to become law, said that "it is just a registry to care for the population," adding that "we will never spy on anybody."

Critics are more concerned about the informa-

tion being leaked or sold, saying it could actually help thieves, extortionists and kidnappers.

The civic group Network for the Defense of Digital Rights said that "only authoritarian countries" demand such information on cellphone users and that criminals could easily steal or clone chips or phones to get around the requirements.

The group noted that a similar registry attempted by a previous administration between 2008 and 2011 was abandoned after user data was leaked. It said such a massive government registry of as



Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador speaks during a news conference marking the 100th day of his third year in office, at the National Palace in Mexico City, Tuesday, March 30, 2021.

Associated Press

many as 120 million cellphone lines would also be vulnerable to hackers.

Opponents said they would seek to block the law in court. □

Elements Restaurant Present Aruba's only Authentic Aruban & Caribbean Buffet A feast of traditional Aruban and Caribbean flavors and ingredients overlooking one of the most spectacular beaches in the world



EAGLE BEACH — Elements Restaurant, located at Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, proudly reveals its **Authentic Aruban & Caribbean Buffet**, available every Monday through Saturday from 12:30 PM to 3:00 PM for \$24.50 per person. On Sundays the restaurant continues with its famous Sunday Brunch.



"We wanted to create an authentic Aruban menu that, with each bite, will take you back-in-time to your childhood home. We want you to relive the nostalgic flavors of the stews and desserts your parents and grandparents prepared. For our international customers, we want them to enjoy a traditional and culturally enrich dining experience." Ewald Biemans, owner/CEO of Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, explains.

Executive Chef Marc Giesbers, Director of Food and Beverage, and his team of local & Caribbean chefs have been working hard and testing out different dishes to reimagine your lunch dining experience. The rotating menu has everything from local cornbread to polenta sticks, plantains, corn patties, Aruban ceviche, seafood salad, sulz, pickled pork, blood sausage, cucumber or papaya stoba, beef or chicken stews, fish or chicken soup, jerk chicken, Caribbean seafood paella, a pasta station, and a dessert tasting of flan, cashew cake, local fruit cake, and much more! "Our team is incredibly diverse, and our buffet assortment highlights this. Besides our traditional local dishes made by our Aruban chefs and cooks, we also offer various Caribbean dishes created by our Jamaican, Dominican, Haitian, Colombian, and Venezuelan chefs and cooks. Each chef or cook concentrates on making an authentic dish from their region, highlighting the delightful palettes they remember from infancy." Chef Marc explains. "It is also important to us to support our local farmers as much as possible. Our assortment rotates to include ingredients that are in season, and we source as much as we can locally or from nearby regions."

The award-winning and adults-only beachfront restaurant will also continue to offer their regular a-la-carte menus, which cater to all dietary needs, including vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free diets. Don't forget that the restaurant also offers its ultra romantic private dinners for two in one of their famous beach cabanas. Guests can enjoy their meal and a Caribbean cocktail or mocktail overlooking the spectacular Eagle Beach on Elements' outdoor seating deck. Reservations are recommended and be mindful that the restaurant does not seat groups larger than six persons and does not take cash (all major credit and debit cards are accepted).

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Aruba has its Dog Control Unit

ORANJESTAD - The Dog Control Unit was put into use on Wednesday April 14, 2021. Last July, the Center for Dog Control was opened to address the serious problem of stray dogs.

Prime Minister Evelyn Wever-Croes attended the commissioning of the unit

and said many positive things have happened in the Dog Control Center since then. The most important aspect is that the so-called culling loft was abolished. Now it has been replaced by a Dog Control Center. A place under responsible management, where most of the unwanted

pets brought in by their owners are given a second chance.

Now Aruba finally has a Dog Control Unit, and its main task is to collect stray dogs, including those with an owner. The aim is to reduce the number of stray dogs to an amount that does not cause any nuisance to the dogs themselves, children, athletes, motorists and tourists. The Dog Control Unit will take the dog to the Dog Control Center to see if it can be reunited with its owner. It is important to point out that the Dog Control Service does not pick up dog cadavers on the street. That is Serlimar's job.



The goal isn't just to pick up stray dogs. The Dog Control Unit will also check compliance with the Dog Ordinance, which has been in effect since 2015. This is a collaboration between the police and Bureau City Inspector. The van from the Dog Control Unit has been facilitated by the Minister of Justice and symbolically

delivered to the Bureau City Inspector to perform this function. If the unit picks up a dog from the street and is later determined to have an owner, the dog owner will face the consequences as stipulated in the Dog Ordinance. Therefore, all dog owners are advised to keep their dog in their yard.



Aruba's Aloe

ORANJESTAD — The aloe plant has been grown on Aruba since the mid-1800. The climate and the dry soil are particularly suitable for the aloe culture. The plant flourishes well here: the Aruban aloe has an aloin content of 22 %, while the content of aloin in the rest of the world is 15% at the most.

The flourishing of the aloe culture in Aruba was under Commander Jan Heleenus Ferguson (1866-1871). That's why the road that leads from downtown through the aloe fields was named after him. In the 19th century, an aloe plantation was also constructed in Socotoro; Socotoro has probably been named after the island of Sokotra or Socotora, at the time a

British island in the Indian Ocean, off the coast of Yemen. That island lies on the same degree of longitude as Aruba and aloe is grown there too. The legend says that Alexander the Great, on the recommendation of Aristotle, conquered this island for the aloe that he used to cure the wounds of his soldiers.

On the aloe plantation Mon Plaisir, owned by the Frenchman Louis Bazin, a for its time modern steam driven cooking installation was installed, in the beginning of 1900. In the 19th century, Aruba was the main supplier of aloin resin that was mainly used for the production of laxatives. The aloin was exported abroad, mainly to New York, but also to Hamburg and to London. The resin from the

Antilles (called 'Curaçao resin' at the time) was one of the best in the world and more expensive than the other types on the market. Aruba's share in the export of 'Curaçao resin' was over 90%. In the economy of that time, before the arrival of the oil industry, aloe meant a reasonable source of income, in particular for the small 'cunucero' (farmer). In times of unemployment – de dry season – the aloe culture was a good source of existence.

In the beginning of 1900, the first scientific research is done on the aloe plant. This confirmed clearly the healing effect of aloin on sunburn and other burns. The arrival of the oil industry had a big impact on the labor market on Aruba and the aloe culture got



a bit on the background. It was only after World War II that the aloe culture was resumed. In 1949 Casey Eman founded the first aloe factory of Aruba, under the name of Aruba Aloe Products Company. At the time, the aloe juices were locally processed to aloin and shipped to the United States. In 1951, the production of Aruban aloe amounted to about 15.000

pounds or 30% of the total world production. Source: <http://www.historiadiaruba.aw>.



AUA Airport is ready to add the next chapter to its history: Gateway 2030 phase 1A can now officially commence



ORANJESTAD – Aruba Airport Authority N.V. (AAA), is about to start its major redevelopment project “Gateway 2030” designed to address some of Queen Beatrix International Airport’s (AUA Airport) capacity constraints, customer experience, and sustainability. It was COVID that forced AUA Airport to start rethinking the execution mode of this ambitious project in the beginning of 2020.

Albo Aruba NV, Bohama Aruba NV, Arubaanse Wegenbouw Maatschappij (AWM), Croon Caribe and CHS Technical Contracting and Trading Company N.V. has been selected to do the job and will work under the name ABC Project Venture.

Aruba’s Minister of Tourism Dangui Oduber.

“As well-established companies on Aruba we are very proud and grateful to be part of this project. Teamwork between AAA, our partners and many other involved stakeholders made it possible for us to be where we are today. With the combined resources, local expertise and know-how of the ABC Project Venture partners, we can take on this challenging project. Not only will this project contribute to the continuity of our businesses, but will simultaneously create opportunities for many other subcontractors and suppliers and stimulate Aruba’s economy. With the realization of this project we will achieve another milestone on Aruba” said Gerco Rijkers representative of the ABC Project Venture.



AAA’s management under the supervision of the Supervisory Board decided to continue with the execution of and investment in the Gateway 2030 project, regardless the COVID crisis. The improvement of the vital airport infrastructure will be a long-term asset. The COVID crisis, being a hard hit for Aruba, will be a temporary phenomenon. However, it has been decided that in the execution a phased approach will be followed. A phased approach will help to better control and manage the execution and will give the opportunity to embed new insights in next phases during this multiyear project. Today, AAA publicly announces that the execution of the first phase will start, the so-called Gateway 2030 Phase 1A.

“Gateway 2030 Phase 1A will make use of the latest technology and innovation to ultimately benefit our passengers, making their journey much faster, seamless and hassle-free. The use of biometric and self-service equipment in the check-in hall, paired with a ‘best in class’ baggage handling system will provide significant efficiency gains to the airport operations, all while adhering to the highest levels of safety, security and sustainability.” said Mr. Shensly Tromp, AAA Director of Development & Technology

Timeline for the Gateway 2030 Phase 1A will be a groundbreaking in June of 2021. The first milestone will be reached in February 2023 where the Baggage Handling Building will be completed. The second milestone will follow in August of that same year (2023) when the completion of the check-in hall and the civil works will be completed. The complete Phase 1A project is set to be handed over by the ABC project Venture to AUA Airport in July of 2024.



The Gateway Phase 1A will consist of:

- 1) The construction of a new baggage hall.
- 2) The implementation of a new baggage handling system.
- 3) The expansion of the US Check in hall, accompanied by
- 4) The necessary airside and landside connections.

The objectives of Phase 1A include:

- 1) A touchless and seamless process at check-in.
 - 2) No need to collect any baggage on the way to US Pre-clearance.
 - 3) Secondary screening will take place only for Selectee screening.
 - 4) Tail-to-Tail transfers: This will allow airlines to further reduce the connection times at their respective hubs.
 - 5) LEED Gold certification Phase 1A will ensure that the project is constructed and operated in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way.
- “During times of crisis it is essential that the government and companies continue to invest in the local economy. With the start of the Gateway 2030 project phase 1A, an investment of 140 million USD will be made, and it will generate more than 200 jobs which is much needed during these hard times. Despite the many challenges this project will continue, and Aruba will have one of the best airports in the region,” said

“In the end it all boils down to two of AAA’s strategic ambitions, namely contributing to the Aruban community and being the leading innovative airport in the Caribbean. Gateway 2030 Phase 1A with its economic spin off, a LEED Gold ambition and its state-of-the-art baggage handling system is a perfect example of how we give substance to these ambitions. The planning and designing phase is complete, it’s time to execute our ambitions. We are excited to make history together!” said AAA CEO Joost Meijs. □



To support the Aruban economy in the best possible way it has been decided to execute this phase 100% locally. This means that a project venture of five Aruban contractors will jointly execute this first phase of Gateway 2030. A project venture of

Banks to see big profits as COVID 'bad' loans become 'good'

By **KEN SWEET**
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The nation's largest banks are expected to report big profits for the first quarter amid renewed confidence that pandemic-battered consumers and businesses can repay their debts and start borrowing again.

The brighter outlook allows banks to move billions of dollars worth of "bad" loans back to the "good" pile, in what are known as loan loss releases. The pandemic forced banks such as JPMorgan Chase and Bank of America to put aside billions of dollars to cover potentially bad loans.

The sum of money put into these pools is nothing small. Across the entire banking industry large and small banks alike a collective \$120 billion is set aside to cover these loans, according to data from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. And a significant chunk of it around \$40 billion was set aside by the nation's largest financial institutions.

These funds, once released, are added to a bank's bottom line when they report their quarterly profits.

Most banks are expected to report significantly improved results compared to the first quarter of 2020.



A Chase Bank is seen, Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2021, in Woburn, Mass.

JPMorgan is expected to report a profit of \$3.09, up from a profit of 78 cents per share a year earlier, according to FactSet. Bank of America is expected to post a profit of 66 cents per share, compared to the 40 cents a share it earned last year.

The banks have massive government stimulus to thank for the improvement, as well as the recovering economy and fewer defaults than originally anticipated. Just in the U.S., trillions of dollars have been

spent to keep individuals and businesses afloat in the form of one-time cash payments and the Paycheck Protection Program. Multiple surveys have shown that Americans used at least a portion of their relief payments to pay down debts or get caught up on their loans, including one from the New York Fed that found households plan to use more than one-third of their stimulus payment to pay down debt.

Further the government has allowed banks to be

more flexible in defining what loans are considered bad or not allowing longer forbearances and grace periods which in turn has kept some loans out of the "bad" pile.

The U.S. economy is estimated to have grown 4.9% in the first quarter after growing by 4.3% in the fourth quarter of last year, according to FactSet. Employers hired at a rapid pace in March. With more people getting vaccinated, spending is expected to pick up.

"I have little doubt that with (the stimulus), huge deficit spending, more (help from the Federal Reserve), a new potential infrastructure bill, a successful vaccine and euphoria around the end of the pandemic, that the U.S. economy will likely boom," said Jamie Dimon, JPMorgan Chase's CEO and chairman, in a letter to shareholders last week.

Bank stocks have reflected investors' anticipation for the improved conditions. Since Oct. 1, the KBW Bank index, which tracks the shares of two dozen large U.S. banks, has risen 66%.

Banks have already started releasing some loans from the bad pile as the outlook for the economy has improved. JPMorgan Chase in the fourth quarter moved \$1.89 billion of the roughly \$20 billion it had set aside during the pandemic out of its loan-loss reserves. Citigroup moved roughly \$1.5 billion of its reserves last quarter as well.

Banks are expected to conduct these loan-loss reserve releases for some time, potentially into the end of 2022, according to analysts at UBS. This is largely because the economic recovery will likely take at least a year, and banks don't want to release the funds all in one shot. □

Associated Press

Mercedes rolls out luxury electric car in duel with Tesla

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — Daimler AG on Thursday unveiled a battery-powered counterpart to its top Mercedes-Benz luxury sedan as German carmakers ramp up their challenge to electric upstart Tesla.

The EQS is the first Mercedes-Benz vehicle to be built on a framework designed from the start as an electric car, rather than using components from an internal-combustion vehicle.

Mercedes underscored the car's technological features by equipping it with a sweeping touchscreen panel that stretches across the entire front of

the car's interior in place of a conventional dashboard. Tesla and other

carmakers are also adding large screens to their interiors.



In this photo provide by German car maker Mercedes and taken in March 2021 shows an EQS car in Stuttgart, Germany. Mercedes-EQ will present the all-electric luxury sedan EQS at a digital world premiere on the Mercedes me media online platform on Thursday, April 15, 2021.

Associated Press

The EQS is the sibling to the company's S-Class large internal-combustion sedan, the luxury brand's flagship model that sells for \$110,000 and up. The two cars aim at the same upper end of the market, though the EQS is set apart by being built on the company's electric-vehicle architecture, or EVA. Mercedes isn't saying yet how much the EQS will cost when it reaches customers later this year.

Daimler said the vehicle will get 770 kilometers (478 miles) on a full charge under testing standard used in the European Union. The company is offering

a year's free charging through Ionity, a network of highway charging stations built by a group of major automakers.

German carmakers were slower to develop all-electric models until tougher environmental regulations and sales lost to California-based Tesla pushed them to ramp up their efforts. Volkswagen sold 422,000 electric vehicles last year and developed the ID.3, a compact it hopes will win over mass-market buyers, while its Porsche division has come out with the Taycan sports car. BMW launched the iX3 electric SUV. □

Global warming's extreme rains threaten Hawaii's coral reefs

By **CALEB JONES**

Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — As muddy rainwater surged from Hawaii's steep seaside mountains and inundated residential communities last month, the damage caused by flooding was obvious — houses were destroyed and businesses swamped, landslides covered highways and raging rivers and streams were clogged with debris.

But extreme rain events predicted to become more common with human-caused global warming not only wreak havoc on land the runoff from these increasingly severe storms also threatens Hawaii's coral reefs.

"These big events are the ones that have the greatest damage because they are the ones that put the most sediment and nutrients out onto the reef," said C. Mark Eakin, senior coral advisor to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the former director of the agency's Coral Reef Watch program.

A warmer climate tends to amplify existing weather patterns, said Hawaii's state climatologist, Pao-Shin Chu, noting the islands have an overall wet climate and that powerful storms are expected to become more frequent.

"Given this climate change or global warming, as we have seen over the last hundred years, the atmospheric water vapor pressure is increasing," said Chu. "We have some evidence showing that we already have some increasing, very intense rain."

Coral reefs make up much of Hawaii's nearshore ocean ecosystem and are critical to the state's economy.

Hawaii's reefs protect populated shorelines from massive ocean swells and storm surges from tropical storms a benefit the U.S. Geological Survey valued at more than \$860 million a year.

Adding tourism, fishing, cultural value and other factors, the state's reefs are worth more than \$33 billion, according to a NOAA-



In this Thursday, Sept. 13, 2018, file photo, rainwater rushes through a spillway in Honolulu after heavy rains from a tropical storm.

funded study.

March's flooding was caused by a weather system that stalled over the islands and brought two weeks of rain, much extremely heavy.

On Oahu's North Shore, "a very large flood wave" rushed down from the mountains and flooded the town of Haleiwa, said National Weather Service hydrologist Kevin Kodama.

"That's a big challenge in Hawaii, where we have small, steep watersheds," Kodama said. "Most of the basins in the state will produce flash flooding."

Last month had 11 flash flood events and was the wettest March in 15 years, he said.

The runoff problem is multifaceted. Deforestation and grading on construction sites and farms lead to increased runoff. Feral animals such as goats, pigs and deer clear vegetation, causing erosion and excessive sedimentation on reefs. And constant, low-level runoff carries gasoline and oil from roadways, household chemicals, trash and pesticides into the ocean.

Any significant change in ocean conditions, such as an influx of fresh water alone, can harm coral health. Contaminants and

soil from land accumulate on reefs and can smother and kill the coral. Scientists say suspension of material in the water can also block sunlight coral needs to survive.

One of the biggest problems for Hawaii reefs is sewage. There are about 88,000 cesspools throughout the islands, many in coastal areas.

"Cesspools are essentially a hole in the ground where there is no treatment prior to wastewater entering the environment," said Jamison Gove, a research oceanographer with NOAA who lives on Oahu's North Shore. Cesspools leak into groundwater and with heavy rains, they overflow and send pathogens and other harmful contaminants into the ocean.

In the town of Pupukea, where professional surfers compete at the famed Banzai Pipeline reef break, more than 330 million gallons (1.25 billion liters) of wastewater enters the ocean each year enough to fill hundreds of Olympic size swimming pools.

On the North Shore during the recent flood, "brown, polluted water just blanketed the entire town," Gove said. "You could just smell it everywhere."

More than half the state's cesspools are on the Big Island, home to some of the state's most expansive and pristine coral reefs. And Gove said some areas have shown a clear decrease in coral cover where sewage routinely enters the ocean. A reef off the town of Puako an extensively monitored location has seen significant losses, he said. Coral cover there has declined by about 70% since 1975. "This is probably one of the more dramatic examples since coral cover is not this high in a lot of places," he said. "But since we don't have this type of data everywhere, we can't say for sure this isn't a more common story."

NOAA is providing data on the issue to the state, and efforts to remove cesspools and change infrastructure to slow and distribute floodwater could help Hawaii's reefs.

The state has banned cesspools in new construction and is attempting to remove the existing ones by 2050.

Although coral reefs worldwide face threats from global warming, including marine heatwaves that bleach and kill coral, storm runoff could prove a more serious and immediate

threat to reefs in Hawaii.

"In Hawaii, I would rate runoff much higher than marine heatwaves in driving coral decline," said Greg Asner, director of the Center for Global Discovery and Conservation Science at Arizona State University. In 2019, Asner and his team used imaging technology on aircraft coupled with satellite data to create new detailed maps of all living coral in the Hawaiian Islands. The data, now being used by federal and state scientists, shows a correlation between land-based pollutants from runoff and coral health.

"More runoff impacts reefs, mostly by mobilizing more chemicals and sediment on land," Asner said. "Increased chemical pollution and sedimentation is a major driver of coral decline."

March's floods were not the first of their kind.

A 2018 rainstorm on Kauai caused widespread flooding that cut off a community for weeks. The storm set a new U.S. record for rainfall in a single day with nearly 50 inches (127 centimeters).

Ku'ulei Rodgers, a coral reef ecologist at the University of Hawaii's Institute of Marine Biology, studied that 2018 flood as well as a 2002 flood in the same area. The 2002 rains swept earth from a construction site into the sea and "killed almost an entire reef," Rodgers said.

After the 2018 flood, a review found fish abundance on a nearby reef had been reduced by 20% and urchins, which help clean reefs and keep coral healthy, were reduced by 40%.

When making policy decisions about how to safeguard reefs, Rodgers said, it's important to understand that land and oceans are intertwined.

"(Native) Hawaiians knew there was a connection between the two because whatever they did upland would affect their fishing downstream," she said. "The better the watershed, the better the reef and vice versa." □

Google Earth adds time lapse video to depict climate change

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE
AP Technology Writer
SAN RAMON, Calif. (AP) —

The Google Earth app is adding a new video feature that draws upon nearly four decades of satellite imagery to vividly illustrate how climate change has affected glaciers, beaches, forests and other places around the world.

The tool unveiled Thursday is rolling out in what is being billed as the biggest update to Google Earth in five years. Google says it undertook the complex project in partnership with several government agencies, including NASA in the U.S. and its European counterpart, in hopes that it will help a mass audience grasp the sometimes abstract concept of climate change in more tangible terms through its free Earth app.

Cornell University climate scientist Natalie Mahowald believes that mission may be accomplished.

"This is amazing," she told The Associated Press after watching a preview of the new feature. "Trying to get people to understand the scope of the climate change and the land use problem is so difficult because of the long time and spatial scales. I would not be surprised if this one bit of software changes many people's minds about the scale of the impact of humans on the environment." This isn't the first time time-lapse satellite imagery has been used to demonstrate show how parts of the world are changing before our eyes due to a changing climate. Most scientists agree that climate change is being driven by pollution primarily produced by humans.

But earlier images have mostly focused on melting glaciers and haven't been widely available on an already popular app like Google Earth, which can be downloaded on most of the more than 3 billion smartphones now in use around the world



This image provided by Google shows a still image of the Columbia Glacier in Alaska as part of a new time-lapse video feature coming out as part of the biggest update to the Google Earth app in five years.

Associated Press

Google is promising that people will be able to see a time lapse presentation of just about anywhere they want to search. The

feature also includes a storytelling mode highlighting 800 different places on the planet in both 2D and 3D formats. □

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

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12-time Oscar nominee Diane Warren hopes for 'awesome' win

By LYNN ELBER
AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — For a dozen and more reasons, Diane Warren would be overjoyed to win a best original song Oscar for her work in "The Life Ahead" starring Sophia Loren.

A trophy for the Italian-language film's song, "Io Si (Seen)," would be Warren's first after 11 previous Academy Award nominations came up short.

"Yeah, it would be great to win. It would be (expletive) awesome," Warren said. "I feel like a team that's gone to the World Series for decades and decades, and never wins."

A triumph would be especially sweet for the veteran songwriter whose first Oscar bid was in 1988 (for the romcom "Mannequin"). The Academy Awards ceremony, originally set for February and delayed by the pandemic, airs April 25, the birthday of her late father, David Warren, and a coincidence that she calls "so cool."

"He believed in me so much he would take me to music publishers when I was 14 or 15," Warren said. "My mom would be saying, 'Why are you doing it? Why are you encouraging her? She can't make a living off that.'"



Diane Warren poses for a portrait at the 90th Academy Awards Nominees Luncheon on Feb. 5, 2018, in Beverly Hills, Calif.

Associated Press

Warren, who grew up in Los Angeles, recounted her dad's reply: "She has talent. She really, really wants this."

Her gifts and drive led to success in a range of pop music genres and in film, with her past Oscar contenders including "I Don't Want to Miss a Thing," by Aerosmith and featured in 1998's "Armageddon." It was a hit tune, one of Warren's many that include "If I Could Turn Back Time" by Cher. Toss out a big name

— Beyoncé, Justin Bieber, Adele — and Warren has likely worked with them.

She's a confessed workaholic who typically writes solo but joined with Common on the 2019 Oscar-nominated "Stand Up for Something" for "Marshall," a biopic about the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall.

"The Life Ahead" brought a new form of collaboration. Warren had written the music and words for the song when director Edoardo

Ponti — Loren's son — realized the Italian-language film needed lyrics to match. Italian pop star-songwriter Laura Pausini was brought in for the task and shares the Oscar nomination.

Warren's music and lyrics are "amazing," said Pausini, who recorded "Io Si" for the film. The song and the movie carry the same message, "and that's the goal."

In "The Life Ahead," Loren plays the aged Madame Rosa, a former prostitute

and Holocaust survivor who helps sex workers by taking in their children. She reluctantly adds an orphaned, street-tough Senegalese youngster known as Momo to her small brood, and the pair move gradually from distrust to love. Impressive newcomer Ibrahima Gu-eye, himself an immigrant to Italy from Senegal, plays the boy.

The third movie adaptation of the 1975 Romain Gary novel "The Life Before Us" is a wrenchingly tender story of those who live on the margins of — and largely are invisible to — society, which prompted Warren's approach to the song.

"The first thing I came up with, sitting at my piano, was, 'I want you to know that you're seen,' she said, breaking briefly into an a cappella performance. "It's so simple but it's so profound, because we all want to be seen."

The song became an integral part of the movie, heard in its translated version over the closing scene. Filmmaker Ponti gladly gives credit to Warren, who approached him in 2019 before "The Life Ahead" went into production with Ponti's legendary mother.

"I hadn't even considered having a song in the movie," he said. □

Fox stands behind Tucker Carlson after ADL urges his firing



In this Thursday, March 2, 2107 file photo, Tucker Carlson, host of "Tucker Carlson Tonight," poses for a photo in a Fox News Channel studio in New York.

Associated Press

By TALI ARBEL
AP Technology Writer

Fox Corp. is standing behind Tucker Carlson after the Anti-Defamation League last week called for the company to fire the

opinion host for his on-air defense of the white-supremacist "great replacement" theory.

In a letter sent Sunday to the civil rights group and shared with The Associat-

ed Press, Fox CEO Lachlan Murdoch said Carlson had "decried and rejected replacement theory" when he said during the Thursday evening segment, "White replacement theory? No, no, this is a voting rights question."

The ADL argued in a reply sent Monday to Murdoch that Carlson used white-supremacist language even if he claimed he didn't.

"Mr. Carlson's attempt to at first dismiss this theory, while in the very next breath endorsing it under cover of 'a voting rights question,' does not give him free license to invoke a white supremacist trope," wrote ADL CEO Jonathan Greenblatt.

The replacement conspir-

acy theory holds that people of color are replacing white people in the West, enabled by Jews and progressive politicians.

During a guest appearance Thursday on "Fox News Primetime," Carlson "embraced a foundational theory of white supremacy," the ADL said.

During the show, Carlson said "the left and all the little gatekeepers on Twitter become literally hysterical if you use the term 'replacement,' if you suggest that the Democratic Party is trying to replace the current electorate of voters now casting ballots with new people, more obedient voters from the Third World." He added that he had "less

political power because they are importing a brand new electorate."

The ADL also listed numerous instances Carlson has used anti-immigrant language in the past, including blaming immigration for making the U.S. "poorer, and dirtier, and more divided," and questioned whether white supremacy was real. □

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1	5	2	4	8	6	7	3	9
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Nets' Aldridge retires at 35 due to irregular heartbeat

By BRIAN MAHONEY

AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — LaMarcus Aldridge retired from the NBA on Thursday after saying he experienced an irregular heartbeat during his final game with the Brooklyn Nets.

Aldridge, 35, posted a statement on social media saying the heart concerns he had during and after Brooklyn's loss to the Los Angeles Lakers on Saturday were one of the "scariest things" he's experienced. Aldridge, who was diagnosed with Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome — an abnormality that can cause a rapid heartbeat — as a rookie in 2007, said he feels better now after getting it checked out but nevertheless decided to end his 15-year career.

"For 15 years I've put basketball first, and now, it is time to put my health and my family first," Aldridge wrote.

The seven-time All-Star signed with the Nets on March 28 and he had become their starting center. He missed the last two games with what the team had called a non-COVID-19 illness.

Nets general manager

Sean Marks said the team fully supported Aldridge's decision.

"We know this was not an easy decision for him, but after careful consideration and consultation with numerous medical experts, he made the best decision for him, his family and for his life after basketball," Marks said.

Aldridge joined the Nets after reaching a buyout agreement with the San Antonio Spurs and provided his new team with an inside post presence that was one of the few things it was missing.

The 6-foot-11 Aldridge had the best of his five games with the Nets in the one before his heart trouble, scoring 22 points in a victory over New Orleans on April 7.

The No. 2 pick in the 2006 draft was long one of the best at his position, averaging 19.4 points in a career that began with nine seasons in Portland.

Trail Blazers general manager Neil Olshey praised Aldridge as one of the best players in the franchise's history.

"During his nine seasons in Portland, LaMarcus battled through multiple injuries

and health concerns but never once allowed them to affect his commitment to his teammates and coaches on the court or the people that benefited from his outreach in the community off the court," Olshey said in a statement.

Aldridge went on to play 5 1/2 seasons with the Spurs and was a five-time All-NBA selection.

He thanked all three teams in his post, saying Portland gave him some "unforgettable years" after drafting a "skinny, Texas kid."

He praised the Nets for allowing him to play his type of game, when so many NBA teams are looking more to the perimeter instead of the post now.

"You wanted me for me," Aldridge said. "In a game that's changing so much you asked me to come and just do what I do which was good to hear."

Aldridge missed time at the end of his rookie season to get treated and also sat out for 10 days in training camp in 2011 after his heart symptoms returned. His arrhythmia came back in 2017 and he missed two games that March.

"You never know when something will come to an



Brooklyn Nets center LaMarcus Aldridge (21) shoots over Los Angeles Lakers center Andre Drummond (2) during the first half of an NBA basketball game Saturday, April 10, 2021, in New York.

Associated Press

end," Aldridge added, "so every day. I can truly say I did make sure you enjoy it even just that." □



In this file photo dated Sunday, Oct. 11, 2020, rows of empty seats are seen at centre court at the Roland Garros stadium in Paris as Serbia's Novak Djokovic and Spain's Rafael Nadal warm up for the final match of the French Open tennis tournament.

Associated Press

MONACO (AP) — Top-ranked Novak Djokovic lost 6-4, 7-5 to Dan Evans on Thursday in the third round of the Monte Carlo Masters for his first defeat of the year.

No. 3 Rafael Nadal had no such problems, breezing past Grigor Dimitrov 6-1, 6-1

to reach the quarterfinals of a tournament he has won a record 11 times.

It was an unusually sloppy performance from Djokovic, the Australian Open champion who has 82 career titles compared to one for his unseeded British opponent.

Top-ranked Novak Djokovic loses, No. 3 Nadal eases into quarters

"I don't want to take anything away from his win, but from my side I just felt awful on the court," Djokovic said. "Nothing worked. It's one of those days."

Having won in Melbourne for his 18th major title, Djokovic was 10-0 in 2021 coming into the match. But he faced pressure from the outset as he trailed 3-0 in the first set.

"Should have and could have done much, much better," Djokovic said. "I can't take anything positive away from this match." He dropped his serve five times in windy conditions.

"Tough to play in these kind of conditions against a guy like Evans who makes you move," Djokovic said. "He's very unpredictable with his

shots. He dismantled my game." Evans, after breaking for a 6-5 lead in the second set, clinched victory on his first match point with a forehand winner that clipped the net.

Nadal broke Dimitrov's serve five times in a lopsided contest that saw the 14th-seeded Bulgarian double-fault three times in his opening service game. "Sorry for him. He played a bad match, that is the truth," Nadal said. "I was doing the right things, but it is true that today was more his fault than my good tennis."

Nadal next faces either sixth-seeded Andrey Rublev or ninth-seeded Roberto Bautista Agut. Evans will play his first Mas-

ters quarterfinal against 11th-seeded David Goffin, who upset fifth-seeded Alexander Zverev 6-4, 7-6 (7). Goffin saved all six break points he faced and broke the imposing German's serve once.

In other third-round play, No. 4 Stefanos Tsitsipas advanced 6-3, 6-4 against Cristian Garin and the big-serving Greek will meet Alejandro Davidovich Fokina after he beat wild-card entry Lucas Pouille 6-2, 7-6 (2). No. 15 Fabio Fognini, the 2019 champion, won 6-2, 7-6 (1) against Filip Krajinovic. The Italian, who convincingly beat a subdued Nadal in the semifinals two years ago, plays No. 12 Pablo Carreno Busta or unseeded Casper Ruud. □

MLS season starts with hopes of returning to normalcy

By ANNE M. PETERSON
AP Sports Writer

Major League Soccer embarks on the 2021 season with a new labor agreement in hand, the return of two big stars, a new team in Austin, Texas, and lessons learned from 2020.

There still won't be full crowds in most places but there are reasons to be optimistic for the league's 26th season as more Americans get vaccinated against the coronavirus.

The league was two games into the season last March when the COVID-19 pandemic shut down sports in the United States. Play resumed in the summer with the MLS is Back tournament in a bubble in Florida before an abbreviated season held in local markets. The Columbus Crew emerged as the MLS Cup champions.

MLS estimated losses at nearly \$1 billion last season, mostly the result of playing in empty stadiums and charter flights for teams. While that will likely improve, the league is expecting another financial hit. As a result, MLS invoked the force majeure clause in the collective bargaining agreement last year.

After a rather contentious back-and-forth — the players had already agreed to concessions in 2020 — a new agreement was struck in February that will run through the 2027 season. The season kicks off Friday



Los Angeles FC forward Carlos Vela and Seattle Sounders forward Jordan Morris, right, vie for the ball during the second half of an MLS playoff soccer match in Seattle, in this Tuesday, Nov. 24, 2020, file photo.

night with a pair of games: San Jose at Houston and Minnesota at Seattle. The league's newest team, Austin FC, will play its inaugural game Saturday against LAFC in Los Angeles.

"MLS has always been about momentum," Commissioner Don Garber said. "More teams, more stadiums, more fans, more players and players that are representing all the exciting activity that takes place on the field. We had the momentum going into last year, and then clearly that got put on pause a bit with the pandemic. Now that momentum has kicked back in."

STARS RETURN

It appears two of the league's top stars, LAFC's Carlos Vela and Atlanta's Josef Martinez, will be back. Vela, who had an MLS-record 34 goals in 2019, missed the MLS is Back tournament because of his wife's pregnancy and the birth of their child. Then he was hampered by injuries and appeared in only eight regular-season games. Martinez was knocked out of last year's season opener with an ACL injury that required multiple surgeries. He's not quite at full strength heading into United's opener, but close. Martinez got advice and

emotional support from Zlatan Ibrahimovic during his recovery.

"Day-by-day, I am stronger. Obviously not 100%, because I think I'll get there once I start playing more games. But I feel OK," Martinez said. "I know it's hard because I haven't touched the ball in a year, so my timing with the ball when I have to cross is not very sharp right now, but we're close."

NEW TEAM

Austin FC joins this year after overcoming challenges presented by the pandemic, like pulling together a roster and staff in the Zoom era, selling 15,000 season

tickets and building a \$260 million stadium.

They were assisted by a bit of star power: Oscar winner Matthew McConaughey is the team's minister of culture.

"This is a city on the rise that marries perfectly with a league on the rise. There's so much energy, there's so much pent up demand in that city. You think about the fact we're the first professional sports league to be in that city," Garber said.

Charlotte joins the league next year and St. Louis will join in 2023. An expansion franchise planned for Sacramento fell apart amid the pandemic, and MLS is looking at its options for a 30th team.

NEW COACHES

There are seven "new" coaches this season. Greg Vanney has moved from Toronto FC to the LA Galaxy, where he'll be tasked with getting a talented roster led by Chicharito on the same page.

His replacement in Toronto, Chris Armas, previously coached the Red Bulls, so he's got league experience, too. Gerhard Struber was hired by the Red Bulls last October and made his coaching debut during the playoffs, but basically this is his first season. The genuine newcomers include Josh Wolff at Austin, Hernan Losada at D.C. United, Gabriel Heinze at Atlanta and Phil Neville at Inter Miami. □

Boston marks 8 years since marathon bombing killed 3 people



In this Monday April 15, 2013 file photograph, emergency workers aid injured people at the finish line of the 2013 Boston Marathon following two explosions in Boston, Mass.

Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Boston is marking eight years since the bombing at the 2013 Boston Marathon killed three people and injured scores of others.

Acting Mayor Kim Janey on Thursday visited fire stations that had been critical in the response to the attack, as well as the memorials marking the spots where the two pressure cooker bombs detonated near the downtown finish line of the storied race.

Janey's office said there will also be a citywide moment of silence at 2:49 p.m., marking the time when the

first bomb detonated, followed seconds later by the second explosion a few hundred yards away.

Janey will then join Gov. Charlie Baker later Thursday to lay wreaths at the bombing sites where 29-year-old Krystle Campbell, 23-year-old Lingzi Lu, and 8-year-old Martin Richard died.

The city also marks each April 15 with "One Boston Day," a day where acts of kindness and service are encouraged.

The U.S. Supreme Court last month said it'll consider reinstating the death sen-

tence against marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev after a federal appeals court tossed out the penalty last summer.

Tsarnaev and his older brother, Tamerlan, also fatally shot MIT Police Officer Sean Collier in Cambridge in the ensuing manhunt.

The Boston Marathon is traditionally held on the third Monday of April, a holiday known as Patriots Day in Massachusetts. It was held virtually last year and has been moved to October this year because of the ongoing pandemic. □